I've always wanted to be a mom. But I'm scared that becoming one would betray my values

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FULL TEXT

To have children or not?At 27 years of age, I have been contemplating whether or not to have children for more than a decade.Some would call it one of the most important life decisions, as it fundamentally changes your body, lifestyle and family structure. But for me, it's been more of an internal battle between an intrinsic desire to be a mother and a looming anxiety toward the worsening climate crisis.The former was a maternal instinct that blossomed at an early age. The latter is an existential dread that emerged and has lingered since my late teens - a period where I devoted myself to climate activism.I still care deeply about the environment, but I've lost a lot of the stamina and strong-will that kept me campaigning on the street over many hot summer weekends. During those years, I found it impossible to reconcile the notion of being a mother AND a true climate activist. Yet the idea of giving up this lifelong yearning to discover and embrace that magical, unconditional love a mother has for her child hurts my heart.For the longest time, I vowed to adopt rather than have my own. It seemed like the perfect solution. It was one I advocated to others - why bring life to this uninhabitable world when there are so many children out there that need to be cared for? What worries me is not so much the cost of raising kids, but the lack of time to spend with themPeople raise kids in poverty all the time. It's not selfish of me to refuse that lifeI felt grief and not joy when my friends and family started having kidsThen two years ago, I met my boyfriend and things got more complicated.For the first time in my life, I felt both the sweetness and burden of wanting to share my life with a partner.To be life partners is to consider the other's opinion when making major decisions. He longs to be a father and is open to adoption but wants to have his own biological children - two - first. I don't want more than two kids.I call him out on his selfish human instinct of passing down his genetics. But deep down some of that selfishness resonates with me - a desire to create a little life made of both of us. So, I tell myself that I would make sure my child grows up to be a positive force to the world, a climate warrior and status-quo disrupter. But even that feels borderline self-righteous. At times I am overwhelmed by a sense of defeat. It seems impossible to fully reconcile my internal struggle.In the book "Generation Dread," Britt Wray delves deep into the phenomenon of eco-anxiety and the feeling of betraying her advocacy community after bearing a child. I interviewed her for a TV segment on turning climate anxiety into purpose. Her reflection both validated and inspired me. She talked about finding radical hope in her son, which motivated her to commit to her work in climate activism - to leave a livable world behind for her child and his generation.It's comforting to know I am far from alone.The decision to have children, a human right, should never have been an ethical dilemma. But it has become one in this age of climate crisis, as the quality of life - also a fundamental right - continues to deteriorate due to human activities.Some of that is within our control, but a lot of it is not. So, I have arrived at a place where I've made peace (mostly) with my decision to have a child. The internal battle is still there and I'm not sure if it will get better or worse as I grow older.What I do know for sure, is that instead of fighting the battle, I'll have it guide me through other decisions I make in life - deciding between flying and taking the train or voting for political leadership that impacts our climate policies.I've come to the belief that child-bearing can bring hope, but only if we treat hope with action.

CAPTION: The decision about whether to have children has been more of an internal battle betweenan intrinsic desire to be a mother and a looming anxiety toward the worsening climate crisis, writes Vicky Qiao.

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